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The President's Daily Brief

3 April 1970

49

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THE PRESIDENT'S DAILY BRIEF

3 April 1970

PRINCIPAL DEVELOPMENTS

Enemy forces in South Vietnam are likely to begin another round of coordinated attacks within the next few days. *(Page 1)*

The situation in Cambodia is discussed on *Page 2*.

Lao Government forces in the Long Tieng area have made limited gains; the Communists meanwhile are trying to improve their supply situation southwest of the Plaine des Jarres and are threatening another government base to the north. *(Page 4)*

Israel's attack yesterday in the Golan Heights area probably was meant as a warning to Syria not to increase activity on its front in order to ease pressure on Egypt. *(Page 5)*

Chou En-lai is to visit North Korea soon. *(Page 6)*

In the Dominican Republic, President Balaguer's refusal this week to resign from office may trigger new disorders. *(Page 7)*

President Mendez has declared a state of emergency in Guatemala. *(Page 8)*

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SOUTH VIETNAM

The Communists appear ready to launch further coordinated attacks within the next few days. [redacted] Many enemy units throughout the country remain in a high state of readiness.

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Forthcoming attacks probably will be similar to those of the past two days: many shellings and some heavy infantry and sapper actions against US and South Vietnamese field positions. Enemy forces still do not appear to be in position for major attacks on population centers.

Communist shellings have dropped off considerably since the first night of the current phase. Allied casualty lists are still growing, however, as additional details become available on the recent actions.

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CAMBODIA

The new government in Phnom Penh remains in control and is working hard--with some success--to broaden its power base. Lon Nol and Sirik Matak are obviously worried that too close an identification with Washington or Saigon will make this task more difficult, and will prevent resumption of negotiations with the Vietnamese Communists.

The Communists appear to be undecided about how far to push the new government. They have used their assets to create trouble in the countryside, and there is much more they can do, even without actually using Viet Cong and North Vietnamese troops. At a minimum, they can be expected to bargain hard for the position they previously enjoyed with regard to supplies and border sanctuaries. Meanwhile Sihanouk continues to issue propaganda statements from Peking, but aside from Hanoi's endorsement, he has had little success in gaining support.

* * *

No major fighting has been reported on the border in recent days, and Communist units seem unsure of their future course of action. Intercepted messages indicate that at least some Communist units are under instructions to fire on Cambodian forces only in self-defense. It is clear from other enemy messages that in some areas of the border the enemy is convinced Cambodian forces are acting in concert with South Vietnamese and US forces, and these Communist elements have been more aggressive.

South Vietnamese cross-border operations, such as one that moved into Svay Rieng Province on 1 April, are undoubtedly contributing to the Communists' concern. [redacted] 50X1 50X1

[redacted] 50X1

(continued)

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In Peking, Sihanouk's spokesman stated on 2 April that the "government of national union" will be formed when certain "young leading figures" of the resistance movement arrive in the Chinese capital. The odds are fairly good that these will be some of the same leading Cambodian leftists who were once members of Sihanouk's government.

The government in Phnom Penh, meanwhile, is also trying to enlist support from leftist elements. There also are rumors that the monarchy will be abolished, a move that would find favor among intellectuals and the youth, but might alienate the more conservative peasantry. The government has also released a large number of "political prisoners," at least some of whom were jailed by Sihanouk for Communist sympathies.

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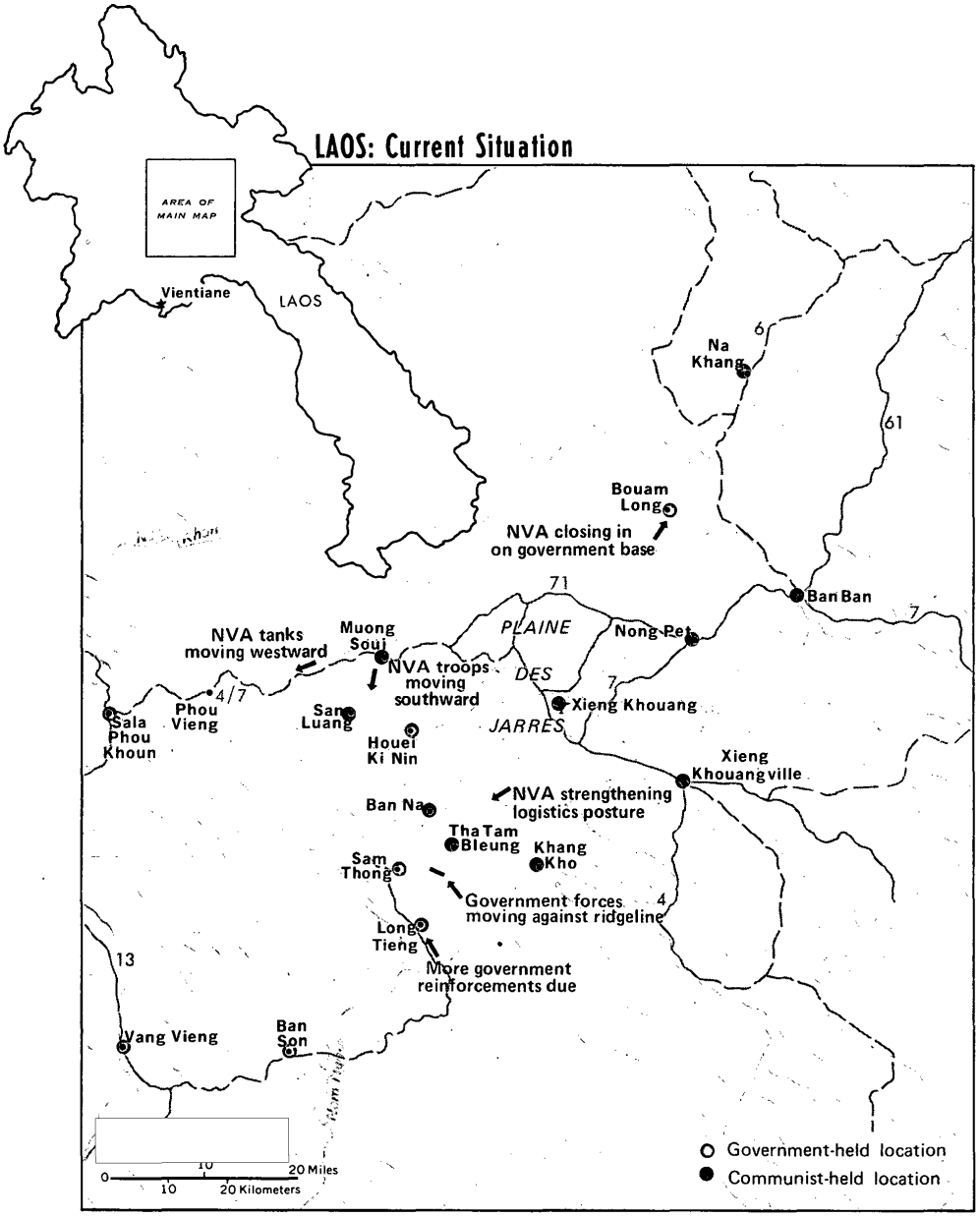

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LAOS

During the past few days, government guerrillas have pushed onto an important ridgeline seven miles north of Long Tieng and have held their ground against enemy counterattacks. The new government position overlooks a key enemy staging area that has served as a springboard for attacks against the Long Tieng defense perimeter.

Intercepted communications, meanwhile, disclose recent efforts by the North Vietnamese 316th Division to improve logistic support of forces operating southwest of the Plaine des Jarres. A supply depot is being moved to the southern edge of the Plaine, and engineers have been ordered to improve roads in this area. These developments suggest the Communists may be preparing for a long and costly campaign against Long Tieng.

Elements of the North Vietnamese 312th Division--which has seen little action thus far in the current offensive--are moving long-range artillery and armor into position for an assault against Bouam Long, the most important government base north of the Plaine. Rugged terrain and heavy airstrikes, however, thus far have prevented the enemy from closing in on the base in strength. The further commitment of significant enemy resources at this time points up the Communists' sensitivity to guerrilla operations against their supply lines.

Enemy operations may also be under way to the west. [redacted] tanks moving westward along Route 7 near the government's base at Phou Vieng, some 15 miles from the Sala Phou Khoun road junction. [redacted] that enemy units of company size are deploying southward from the Muong Soui area. 50X1 50X1

On the political front, Prime Minister Souvanna continues to touch base with important civilian and military leaders on the government's response to the Communist peace proposal of 6 March. At a recent cabinet meeting, there was unanimous support for Souvanna's intention to take a tough line with the Communists regarding a bombing halt in Laos. Souvanna will present a draft of his response to Souphanouvong for cabinet approval in the next few days.

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ISRAEL-SYRIA

Yesterday's seven-hour Israeli military action in the Golan Heights was confined to artillery and air attacks and did not take Israeli ground forces across the border. A Jerusalem broadcast while the attack was in progress clearly suggested that the Israelis--who are concerned primarily with developments on the Egyptian front--want to nip in the bud any plans Damascus may have to "ease the burden on Egypt" by warming up the Syrian front. The broadcast hinted that such Syrian plans would risk severe Israeli reprisal, noting pointedly that Israeli forces, in their actions yesterday, "did not use all the possibilities at their disposal."

Israel probably now has about 6,000 troops and some 100 tanks on the Golan Heights. With these forces they could make a combined ground-air attack into Syria.

Tel Aviv claims to have knocked down three Syrian MIG-21s yesterday--bringing the total Syrian aircraft losses since the 1967 war to 20; it admits the loss of one aircraft, an F-4 Phantom.

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COMMUNIST CHINA - NORTH KOREA

Chou En-lai's imminent visit to Pyongyang shows how much Chinese relations with North Korea have warmed over the past six months. The visit, scheduled for early this month, was announced on 1 April, several days after Peking's new ambassador was received in Pyongyang. Aside from his brief trip to Hanoi last September on the occasion of Ho Chi Minh's death, this marks Chou's first trip outside China since mid-1966.

Discussion topics are almost certain to include Japan's expanding role in Asia, the latest developments in Indochina, and the possibility of additional economic assistance. The two leaders probably will avoid Sino-Soviet affairs. Pyongyang's steadfast neutrality in the Sino-Soviet dispute was the primary reason relations have been chilly; the North Koreans were treated to a dose of Red Guard diplomacy in 1967.

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DOMINICAN REPUBLIC

President Balaguer's refusal this week to resign from office may trigger new disorders. Seven opposition parties have agreed to abstain from the elections on 16 May unless Balaguer steps down. Since Balaguer is a candidate, the opposition contends that his resignation is necessary to ensure fair elections. The President, whose term expires in August, had earlier offered to quit temporarily for the month preceding elections [redacted] He has vowed to stand for election with or without opposition participation.

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Faced with the President's hard-nosed response, it is doubtful that the opposition's fragile coalition will remain united, and some parties probably will cave in and participate in the elections. The presidential announcement, however, will further strengthen the belief of some factions that violence is their only effective political weapon.

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NOTE

Guatemala: In the face of a deteriorating security situation, President Mendez last night declared a state of emergency. The government has been highly embarrassed by the number of terrorist incidents in the country and presumably now hopes to deal more forcefully with the security problem.

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Meanwhile, the government has refused the demands of the kidnapers of West German Ambassador von Spreti for the release of 15 imprisoned subversives.

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